"WE ARE HERE." So, in translation, reads the French phrase, *Nous y voici,* carved on the marble slab set in the earth on the river lawn of the Pell house, called the Hermitage. In such fashion the family made known its presence at Bear Mountain. It is now in the Trailside Historical Museum.

Who Was Mrs. Pell?

A 19TH CENTURY GENTLELADY AT BEAR MOUNTAIN

RICHARD J. KOKE

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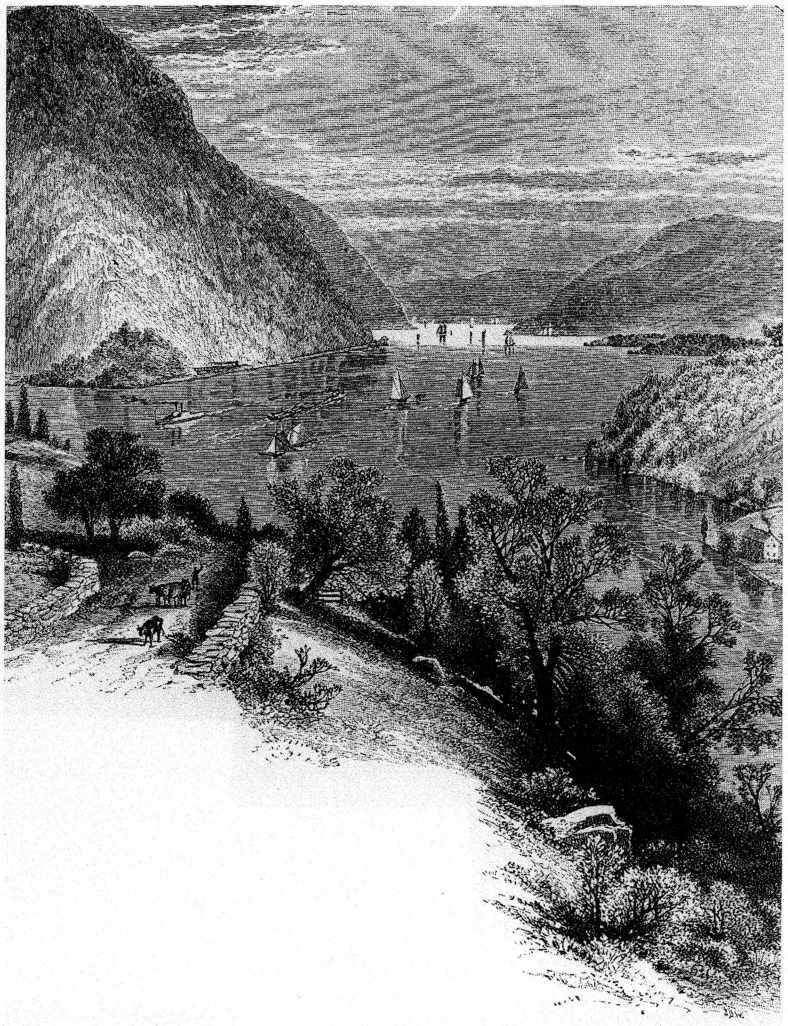
Foreword

Richard J. Koke and William H. Carr co-authored the first Bear Mountain Trailside Museums' Historical Bulletin, entitled *Twin Forts of the Popolopen.* It tells the story of Forts Clinton and Montgomery, two garrisons built by the Revolutionary forces on the Hudson River near Bear Mountain, and the dramatic role they played in the War of Independence. The bulletin was published in 1937 by the American Museum of Natural History in New York, which, in partnership with the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, was also operating Trailside Museums and Nature Trails on the grounds where Fort Clinton once stood. Opened in 1927 as a field station to develop new ways to reach city people with the "nature message," Trailside now welcomes more than 300,000 visitors a year.

It seemed appropriate, then, to mark Trailside's 75th anniversary by inviting Richard Koke to write a sequel describing what happened to the property after the assault by the British and the fort's heroic defense by a vastly outnumbered American garrison.

Palisades Interstate Park Commission gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Robert P. Wallace of Amawalk, New York, who provided computer enhancements and interpretations of the photographs, maps, and architectural drawings of the Pell Mansion. Mr. Wallace also offered helpful comments regarding the Popolopen Creek and Fort Clinton battlesite areas that preceded Mrs. Pell on the bluffs above the Hudson River at Bear Mountain.

Jack Focht
Director, Trailside Museums & Wildlife Center



THE HUDSON RIVER FROM FORT MONTGOMERY, 1875. George and Richard Pell were alive when this splendid engraved view, taken from a drawing by J.D. Woodward, was published in *The Hudson River by Pen and Pencil for Tourists and Others*. The Fort Clinton bluff, where the Hermitage stood, is at right, overlooking the estuary alive with sailing craft. Iona Island and Dunderberg Mountain are in the distance, with Anthony's Nose at the left. Woodward's illustration is also of particular interest in depicting the two-story dwelling that once stood on the narrow cooper's lot on the south shore of Popolopen Creek, adjoining the Pell property.

WHO WAS MRS. PELL?

Recently, the Palisades Interstate Park Commission published a delightful little book called *Doodletown*, an informal history of a vanished hamlet in the shadow of Bear Mountain in the Highlands of the Hudson. In it, Elizabeth Stalter poses an intriguing question: "Who was Mrs. Pell?" The lady in question was a gentlewoman known for her social graces who lived on a bluff overlooking the Hudson in the 19th century. The land where Mrs. Pell's house once stood, near where the Bear Mountain Bridge now crosses the Hudson River, is part of Trailside Museums & Wildlife Center, a popular family attraction in Bear Mountain State Park.

For one whose Trailside roots reach back to the 1930s and who can recall the days when Bill and Marion Carr built a tradition of outdoor nature education in the park, Mrs. Stalter's query rekindled memories and prompts this reminiscence on the enigmatic lady whose spirit still lingers at Trailside. Her home on the bluff, the Hermitage, although long ago destroyed by fire, is still remembered as the Pell Mansion because of its long association with that family. It was, however, built by other hands, and its construction preceded by more than three decades

* Elizabeth "Perk" Stalter, *Doodletown: Hiking Through History in a Vanished Hamlet on the Hudson* (Bear Mountain, N.Y., Palisades Interstate Park Commission Press, 1996).

the appearance in the 1830s of the well-to-do Knickerbocker lady from New York, Adelia Pell, whose name clings to it.

The story of the Hermitage, known also as Clinton House, began in 1796, thirteen years after the close of the Revolutionary War, when Eugene Lucet, "a French gentleman" of the New York mercantile firm of Lucet & Co., purchased the interest held by one James Greenleaf, merchant, in thousands of acres of wilderness in the Bear Hill, Queensboro, and Forest of Dean tracts and Staats Patent that extended inland from the river into the Popolopen valley.

Within three years, Lucet consolidated his control over his holdings and developed extensive business interests that included not only the newly established Queensboro Furnace, but also a bustling commercial enclave inside the mouth of Popolopen Creek (then called Popolopen Kill) that included three docks, three houses, a store, a gristmill, a sawmill, and a slitting mill in which a nail manufactory was established.

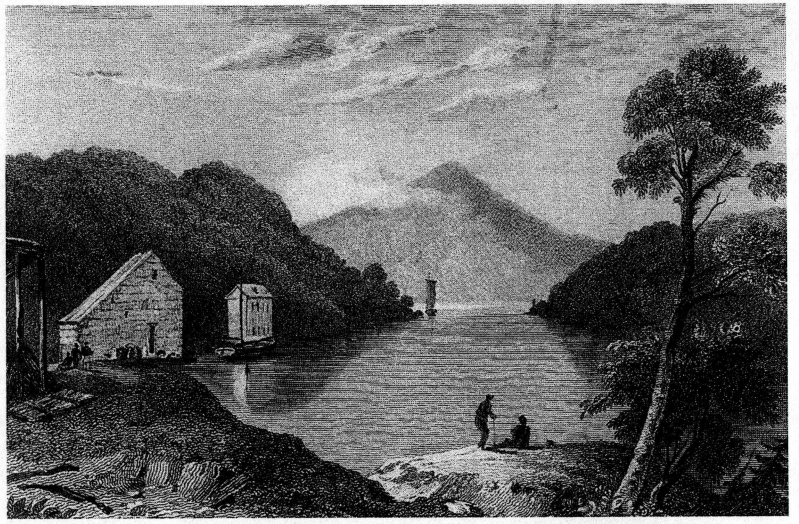
Eugene Lucet first appeared in the New York *Directory* in 1797, at 291 Greenwich Street. From that house, he moved shortly thereafter to 6 Duane Street and subsequently to other addresses in the city. The supervision of his Popolopen enterprises, however, demanded enough of his personal presence for him to plan the construction of a home in the Highlands. The site he chose was the hilltop south of the creek where the abandoned ruins of Fort Clinton lay. This fortification, built in 1776 together with Fort Montgomery on the opposite side of the creek, played a vital role in the Revolutionary War and had been captured by the British in 1777 as part of their futile attempt to relieve Burgoyne at Saratoga.

An Elegant Country Seat

The enterprising Lucet cleared the wartime debris still on the ground, leveled some of the earthworks, and erected on the site of the Star Redoubt overlooking the Hudson a hip-roofed frame house on two-foot-thick stone walls that formed a raised basement dug some four feet into the ground. When it was completed, at the end of 1799, he described it as an "elegant two-story house with cellars and cellar kitchen."

The Pell Mansion, as it would come to be known in later years, stood on the present site of the Trailside Historical Museum, within yards of the Bear Mountain Bridge tollhouse. As remembered by a later occupant, a ten-foot-wide central hall on the first floor, flanked by two rooms on either side, passed through the house to porches on the front and rear of the building. The bedchambers on the second floor were lighted by dormers; the sloping ceiling and roof rafters rested on the upright walls about four feet above the floor.

The supporting accommodations, from Lucet's description, included a stable, "sundry small buildings," and a coach house, which would suggest, as far as designation is concerned, a touch of opulence somewhat alien

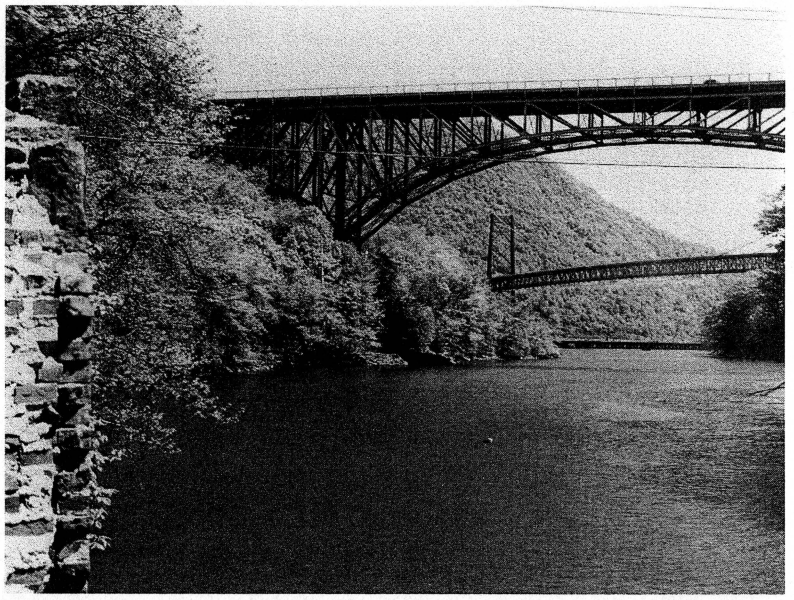


POPOLOPEN CREEK, 1800, looking towards the Hudson River and Anthony's Nose from the Lucet mill. The early view was engraved by John Cousen (1802–1880) and was published in London in 1826 from a drawing by John Maude, taken during his visit in 1800. The two-story miller's house on the north shore is in the distance.

to the surrounding wilderness. The Highlands chronicler William Thompson Howell, writing in 1910, characterized the building as of a "most charming form" and an interesting "combination of colonial and French styles"—not a surprising stylistic blend, considering that it was built by a Frenchman. Of two known photographs of the house, only one—a somewhat indistinct view of the building taken in its later years—affords a close glimpse of the exterior, but the details of Lucet's original construction are largely obscured by 19th century additions.

The house was no sooner complete, with Lucet in residence, when he placed an advertisement in a New York newspaper, *The Spectator*, in December 1799, expressing a desire to retire from "the bustle of business"

POPOLOPEN CREEK, 1866, with the great wooden gristmill, 65 feet by 45 feet in size, that replaced Lucet's early mill. It was described as "new" in 1810 when offered for sale, having four pairs of millstones five feet in diameter, and capable of manufacturing 20,000 barrels of flour a year. The creek was navigable to the mill for boats upwards of 50 tons to load and unload alongside the building. From Benson J. Lossing, *The Hudson, from the Wilderness to the Sea*.

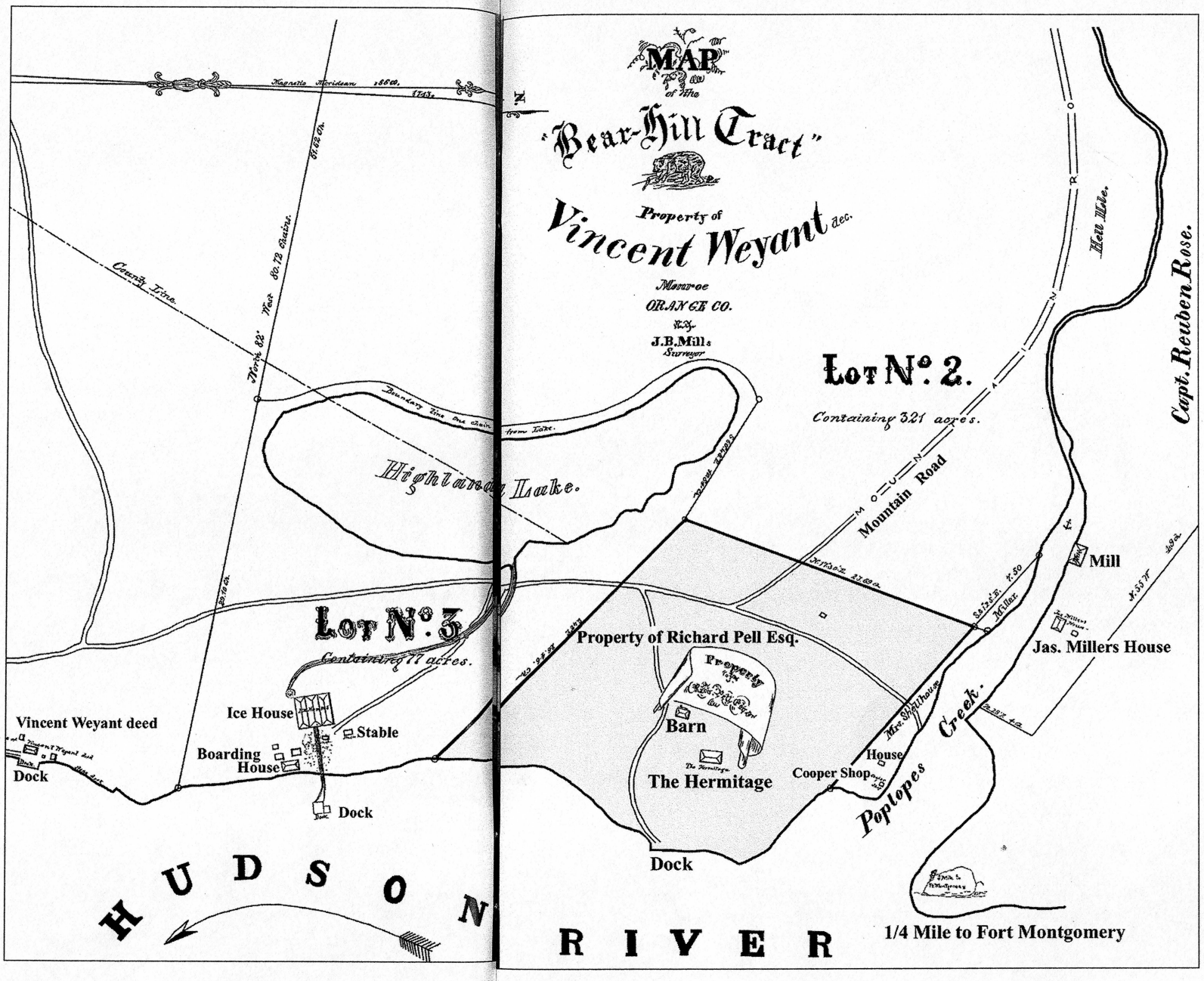


POPOLOPEN CREEK from the ruins of the gristmill at the left. Popolopen Bridge, opened in 1916, is in the foreground, and the Bear Mountain Bridge, erected in 1923–24, is in the distance, spanning the river to Anthony's Nose. Photograph by the author, 1949.

and offering to sell his interests in the iron works and four separate parcels of real estate. One of these was the 800-acre Bear Hill Tract of 1743 on which his house stood. The building, he said, could accommodate a large family and was available fully furnished, but as it was his domicile, the parcel on which it stood would be the last to be sold.

The location, facing Anthony's Nose, commanded a beautiful prospect, and the many visitors who ascended the hill declared it to be one of the most desirable on the river. As an added attraction, there was a "plentiful fish pond" three-quarters of a mile long—now Hessian Lake —only a short distance away. For particulars, interested parties could make application either to himself "on the premises" or to his partner Charles Lagarenne at their New York office at 6 Duane Street.[1]

Detail of a 19th century manuscript map of the Bear Hill Tract, owned by Vincent Weyant, deceased, and surveyed by J.B. Mills, showing the square 50-acre lot purchased by Adelia Pell in 1834 and held by the family until 1889. At the time of the survey, the property was owned by Richard Montgomery Pell. The map indicates "The Hermitage" and at the left the ice house at the Hermitage Dock. Highland Lake, now Hessian Lake, is at the top left, and at the right is Popolopen Creek with the gristmill and miller's house on the north shore, and the thin two-acre lot on the south shore on which a cooper's shop was situated.



Not everyone, however, shared his enthusiastic praise of the house. John Maude, for one, an English traveler who sailed up the Hudson in June 1800, acknowledged the house was "handsome," but declared it "a dreary location and without society." Lucet continued to run the advertisement into 1800, but no buyers were forthcoming. He advertised again in the *Evening Post* in March 1802, offering what he termed a "truly valuable estate" of nearly 6,000 acres that included not only the Queensboro Iron Works, mines, mills, a tannery, and other improvements, but also "an elegant country seat." As before, prospective buyers could discuss the particulars of sale either with himself "on the premises" or with Lagarenne on Duane Street in the city.

Lucet's involvement with the Popolopen lands continued unabated through the first decade of the 19th century, but his interests were shifting down the valley to Haverstraw, where he was described as a resident in 1804 and an ironmaster in 1805—though he still continued to be active in New York and was listed in the city's *Directory* until 1808-09. By 1808 he had divested himself of his remaining Popolopen holdings, most of which were acquired by Alexander Macomb. Macomb, however, unable to meet his financial obligations, had his properties confiscated and sold at auction in 1810 by the Court of Chancery to satisfy his creditors. The *Evening Post* advertised the tracts for sale in September, including the mills and buildings within the creek.[2]

By the 1820s, the rugged Bear Hill Tract and a small parcel of the Staats Patent that lay south of Popolopen Creek were owned by John Suydam, another New York merchant. On May 31, 1823, he and his wife Jane sold both the Bear Hill Tract and the Staats land, a total of 820 acres, including the Lucet house, to Francis Weyant of Rockland County for $2,870, or $3.50 an acre. Excluded from the sale was a long thin two-acre sliver of land extending along the south shore of the creek, the site of a cooper's shop and a humble dwelling.

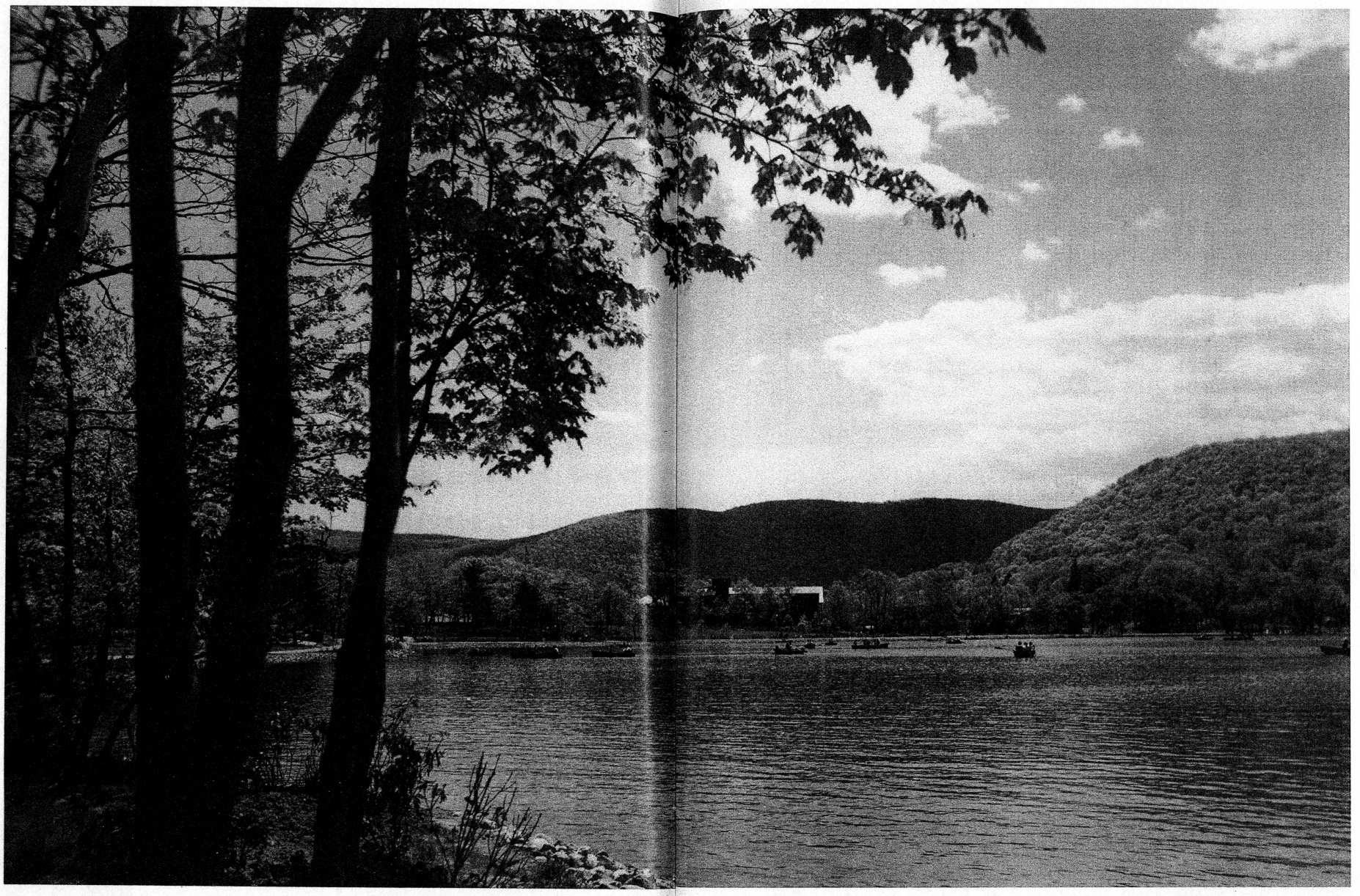
Little more than a year later, on June 24, 1824, Francis Weyant sold this same property to Vincent Weyant of Haverstraw for $1,400, again

mentioning the exclusion of the lot beside the creek. Generations later, in 1910, the husband of a Weyant descendant visited the house, knowing it to be an early family home of his wife's forebears. He was impressed by its fine design, but had to confess ruefully that it seemed an unusual creation for a "man of Weyant's type, not greatly cultured and living the life—one might almost say—of a backwoodsman."[3]

The Widow Pell

After ten years in Vincent Weyant's possession, the Frenchman's house on the bluff at Fort Clinton began its most interesting and lengthy period of ownership. On May 8, 1834, Vincent sold the house, barn, shed, outbuildings, and 50 surrounding acres at the confluence of the Hudson and Popolopen Creek to Adelia Duane Pell (1782-1860), a New York City widow, for $1,200. The property, situated on the best piece of the Bear Hill Tract, was laid out in a square, each of its four sides measuring 25 chains and 60 links in length. One side bordered on the river, another on the creek's south shore and the exempted two-acre lot, and the other two sides on the lake and wilderness areas to the south and west. Interestingly, the newly acquired acreage lay both in Orange and Rockland counties, the partition line passing diagonally through the property.

Docking privileges on the river "as they now appertain to said premises" were also included by the terms of the deed, which probably alluded to a landing a short distance downstream towards Doodletown Bight, where the broken ground descended to the waterside and permitted the establishment of a landing identified on J. C. Sidney's 1850 map of Orange County as the Hermitage Dock. It was a name that could readily be associated with the rustic retreat now enjoyed by the Widow Pell. For much of the century thereafter, the dock was used for shipping ice until the early days of the Palisades Interstate Park, when it was replaced by the South Dock.



HESSIAN LAKE, looking south towards the Bear Mountain Inn. In 1799, Eugene Lucet described it as a "plentiful fish pond" when attempting to sell the Bear Hill Tract and his newly erected house at Fort Clinton. Adelia Pell found it a quiet retreat for boating and fishing. Photograph by the author, 1951.

On the same day she purchased the house and property, Adelia Pell also arranged a ten-year lease with Weyant on another 150 acres of his Bear Hill Tract abutting her property to the south that included "a certain pond or lake." This she agreed to rent at the then-princely sum of $5.00 a year.

The lake itself—earlier, Lucet's "plentiful fish pond"—was described shortly thereafter as a sheet of crystal water surrounded by a primitive forest. It was a scenic attraction known over the years by many names—Bloody Pond, Bear Hill Pond, Lake Sinnipink, Highland Lake, and now Hessian Lake. From 1835 through almost 1900, it was a source of ice, harvested and stored in the winter in icehouses at the landing for summertime shipment to the New York market.[4]

The Pells brought with them their own historic associations with Fort Clinton and neighboring Fort Montgomery. At the time of her purchase, Adelia, one of ten children, was in her early 50s. She had been a widow for three years and was the mother of five sons. She brought to the Popolopen an aura of breeding and family background. Her father, James Duane (1733-1797), had been a delegate to the Continental Congress and the New York Senate, had sat as a federal judge, and was the mayor of New York City when George Washington was inaugurated as our first president in 1789.

She was truly to the manor born on both sides of the family. Her mother, Maria, was a daughter of the third Lord of the Manor of Livingston on the upper Hudson. At the age of 12, Adelia had been described as lively as a cricket and, when of age, she married Alfred Sands Pell, a descendant of the worthy Pells of the Manor of Pelham in Westchester. She and Alfred, who was in the mercantile line, resided on Fourth Street in the city, where she remained after his death in 1831. Sometime before 1841, she moved to 5 Bond Street, her home for some 12 years. Bond Street in Mrs. Pell's day was the most fashionable thoroughfare in the city and a center of high society. An "old resident," recalling the fine families who lived there, remembered the Pells as well

known in the city's mercantile and social life and their sons as "the Apollos of their day."[5]

The Hermitage

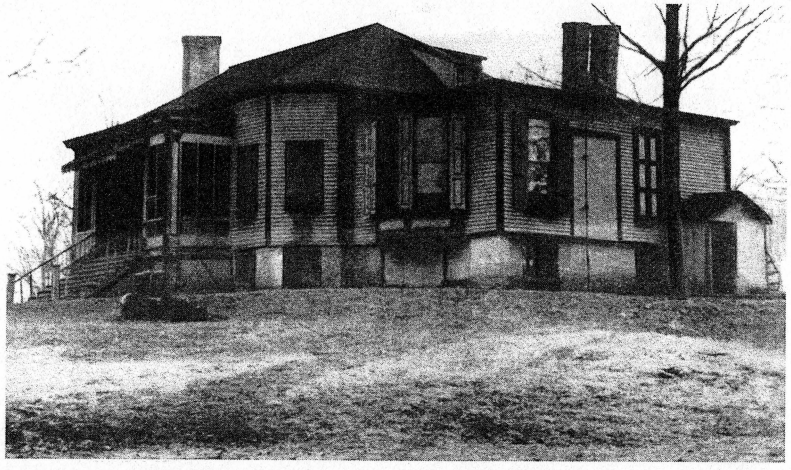
Fort Clinton was a retreat to which she could turn for relaxation. Its tranquility and solitude were, no doubt, compelling reasons for the house being named at an early date, appropriately, the Hermitage, and so was it designated on an 1850s manuscript map of the Bear Hill Tract. Yet at times it was also called Clinton House, as noted on the 1854 O'Connor map of Rockland County, commemorating not only the fort

THE HERMITAGE from the river lawn, with the brownstone blocks on which the cannonball and bar shot were mounted. This is one of two known photographs of the building. Photograph from PIPC Archives.

but also the two Clinton brothers, George and James, who defended it in 1777 and their British adversary, Sir Henry Clinton, who captured it.[6]

The well-preserved remains of the Outer Redoubt at the western edge of the mansion's grounds were a visible reminder of the battle. But for the Pells, with their own connections to early American history, the nearby ruins of Fort Montgomery north of the Popolopen were even more compelling in evoking memories of Richard Montgomery, a kinsman who had been killed in the ill-starred Canadian invasion of 1775. For a brief two years, more than half a century earlier—even before Adelia was born—Richard had been married to Adelia's Livingston-born aunt, Janet (1743-1828). The fort had been named in his honor, and it was in his memory that Adelia's youngest son bore the honored name of Richard Montgomery Pell.[7]

Their pride in owning historic ground was evident, too, in their placement of a white marble slab in the earth at the foot of the stairs

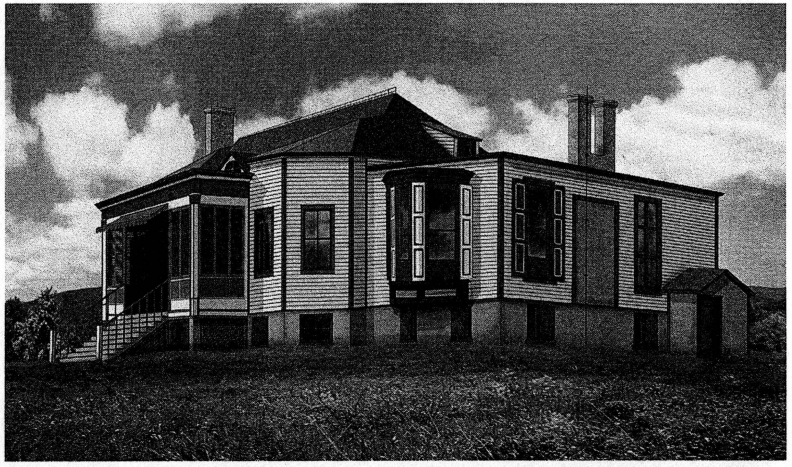


THE HERMITAGE. Erected by Eugene Lucet in 1799 and successively owned by the Suydam, Weyant, and Pell families. A view from the northeast, taken shortly before its destruction, showing the parlor and dining room wing and bay windows added by the Pells. Photograph from PIPC Archives.

leading from the house to the river lawn, on which was cut the inscription "*Nous y voici*, Tuesday, Oct. 8th 1777." Translated as "We are here," it gave a proprietary touch to the family presence, with the French phrase taken from a message sent from the Popolopen by Sir Henry Clinton to General John Burgoyne after his adroit capture of the two forts.[8]

Adelia was not the only family member to own a Revolutionary War fort. In 1820, William Ferris Pell (1779-1840), her late husband's brother, had purchased the ruins of Fort Ticonderoga on Lake Champlain in northern New York, which today, painstakingly restored by the Pells, is a major tourist attraction in the Adirondack region.

The two generations of Adelia's family who frequented Clinton House for more than half a century took pleasure in its maintenance and improvement. Their country seat was a self-contained enclave that lay close to the milling and barrel-making activity in the Popolopen Gorge and to the harvesting of ice on the lake and its shipping from the Hermitage Dock.



THE HERMITAGE. A reconstruction by Robert P. Wallace of Amawalk, New York, based on the photograph formerly in the John Cronk collection.

THE HUDSON RIVER from Popolopen Bridge before the Bear Mountain Bridge was built, looking toward Anthony's Nose, and downstream towards Peekskill Bay. The little vessel in the creek is the replica of Henry Hudson's *Half Moon,* built in Holland for the Hudson-Fulton Celebration in 1909. While in the care of the Palisades Interstate Park Commission, the boat was moored in Popolopen Creek for many years. In 1924, it was moved upriver to the City of Cohoes.

The origin of the name Anthony's Nose, a striking 900-foot elevation, is uncertain. The earliest known mention was in 1672 in a proposal to erect a blockhouse and battery on the shore of the river opposite "Antonio's Nose." It was, curiously, sometimes called St. Anthony's Nose, but the best known and most entertaining version is the highly imaginative account given in 1809 by Washington Irving in his *Knickerbocker History of New York in the 1600s.* In it, he ascribed the name to Peter Stuyvesant's Dutch trumpeter, Anthony Van Corlaer, who, Irving wrote, had a nose of a very lusty size that projected "boldly from his countenance like a mountain." While passing through the Highlands on a voyage up the river, the good Anthony leaned over the ship's side at the very moment the sun broke forth from behind a high bluff, and one of its rays fell "upon the refulgent nose of the sounder of brass." According to the story, this potent ray, hissing hot, reflected into the water and killed a mighty sturgeon sporting beside the vessel. Irving wrote that when Stuyvesant heard of this "astonishing miracle, he marvelled exceedingly" and bestowed "the name of Anthony's Nose to a stout promontory in the neighborhood, and it has continued to be called Anthony's Nose ever since that time."

Photograph by Edward Hagaman Hall, 1917.

The historian Benson J. Lossing, who visited the fort in 1848 while researching his famous *Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution*, made mention of Mrs. Pell's "fine mansion" and the "cultivated grounds" surrounding it. Mention in her will of cattle, stock horses, carriages, wagons, sleighs, and agricultural implements on the property is clear evidence of farming activity in the summer and a human presence in the quiet winter months. The tillage of soil for the sustenance of those in the house continued through the century, as remembered in the 1930s by Frank Herbert of Fort Montgomery, who recalled plowing the Pell property as a boy.[9]

The only access to the house from the dock and Doodletown was by a lane through a gated entrance that left the main road (now Route 9W) near the present Bear Mountain Bridge traffic circle and passed through the woodland near the Outer Redoubt. This road, skirting the southern edge of the grounds, is still in use as a Trailside service road. Nearby, there was a latticed building called the Milk House.

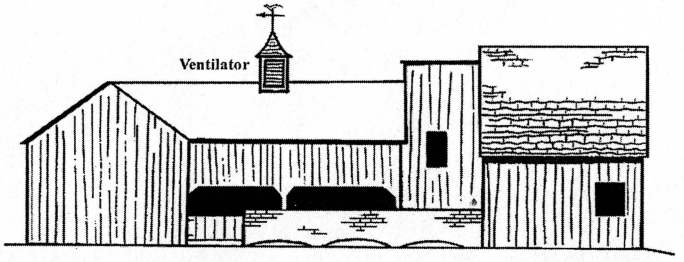
The estate, as remembered by many, was tastefully landscaped with walks and pathways. A fountain on the lawn was fed with water piped in from the lake. Terraced levels facing the river provided spectacular views downstream towards Dunderberg Mountain and Peekskill Bay, north to Sugar Loaf, and east to the awesome face of Anthony's Nose. A tennis court on one of the levels, now beneath the Bear Mountain

RIVERFRONT ELEVATION OF THE HERMITAGE as enlarged by the Pells. Reconstruction by Robert P. Wallace from a sketch by Enoch Stevens.

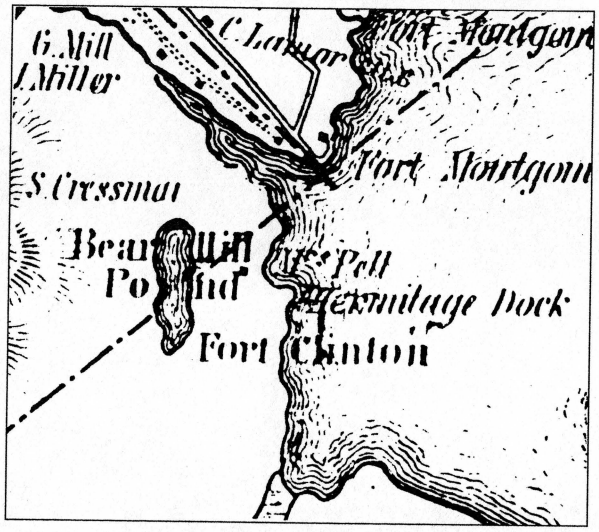
Bridge, offered an athletic outlet to family and friends. A nearby trail zigzagged its way downhill to a little dock under the bluff that was later obliterated by the railroad. The barn stood a few hundred feet west of the house, and beyond that, a low hollow at one side of the Outer Redoubt served as a basin for a small body of water that was always known as the Pell ice pond.

Adelia's pleasure in boating and fishing was evident in 1842, when she signed a 25-year lease with John M. Lyons, an ice harvester, that involved part of the lake on the 150-acre tract she still held under lease from Weyant. She stipulated specifically in the agreement that she retained the right to launch boats and fish "in said lake at Fort Clinton."[10]

Her jaunts to and from the fishing grounds also gave her the opportunity to become acquainted with the aged Beverly Garrison, a well-known local personality who lived in a cottage near the north end of Lake Sinnipink. Beverly's father had been a wagoner at Fort Montgomery when the forts were captured; he was then 14. He was a hale octogenarian when Lossing came to the Hermitage. Always ready to talk about the war, he would readily relate how he had stood on the ruined ramparts of Fort Montgomery in 1780 and watched the traitor Benedict Arnold flee down the river when he deserted to the British. As a native of the region, he could recall, too, Eugene Lucet, the construction of the house, and its early occupants.[11]



THE PELL BARN. Elevation by Enoch Stevens, 1935.



J.C. Sidney's map of Orange County, 1850, indicates the home of Adelia Pell and the Hermitage Dock.

The frequent unearthing of military objects in the course of farming and grading the grounds provided the family a unique opportunity for collecting mementos of the wartime occupation and battle in which Richard took a strong interest. Of the many relics found, a cannonball and a bar shot were accorded special attention and were mounted on two small brownstone blocks placed as ornamental features on the river lawn about 30 feet from the house.

Further indication of the family's interest in collecting objects of historical significance was evident in 1866, when Richard donated to the New York Historical Society what he described as a "portion" of the historic iron chain that had stretched across the Hudson from Fort Montgomery during the Revolutionary War. And in 1928, 46 years after his death, his widow (who had remarried and was then Mrs. Louis T. Hoyt) presented the Society with two more links from Richard's collection, carefully boxed and identified as two of 15 raised from the river bottom.[12]

Adelia had intended to leave her country seat to Richard, as was indicated in her will of 1853. In a change of heart, though, she transferred ownership of the house and the 50 acres to him for $6,000 on February 4, 1854, with a condition that she be allowed to occupy and enjoy the premises without interference. This she did until, well into her 70s, she passed away six years later on February 7, 1860. For Adelia Pell, Clinton House had been a place of contentment for 26 years.[13]

The Brothers Pell

Among her sons, Richard and George were always closest to the property. On April 23, 1860, two months after his mother's death, Richard transferred title to the house and acreage to George for $10,000, but retained the books, maps, pictures, and relics in the house. Their agreement stipulated, however, that if George predeceased him, everything would revert back to Richard.

Richard's interest and role as a landowner, nevertheless, did not end with the sale to his brother. On March 26, 1866, he and George extended the family holdings with a joint purchase of 25 adjoining acres that abutted the ice industry property and Popolopen Creek. They also bought some small plots within the ruins of Fort Montgomery, and thereby symbolically tied themselves even closer to their forebear, Richard Montgomery, who had died in battle.[14]

The Pell presence, no doubt, was another incentive that attracted more family members to the Highlands, with the names of William, Arthur, and Alfred Pell appearing as landowners along the river shore between Fort Montgomery and Highland Falls in later decades of the century.[15]

The brothers renovated the house extensively. Bay windows were added on the riverfront and a one-story parlor wing, with a 12-foot-high ceiling and tall windows, took shape on the north side, which featured a

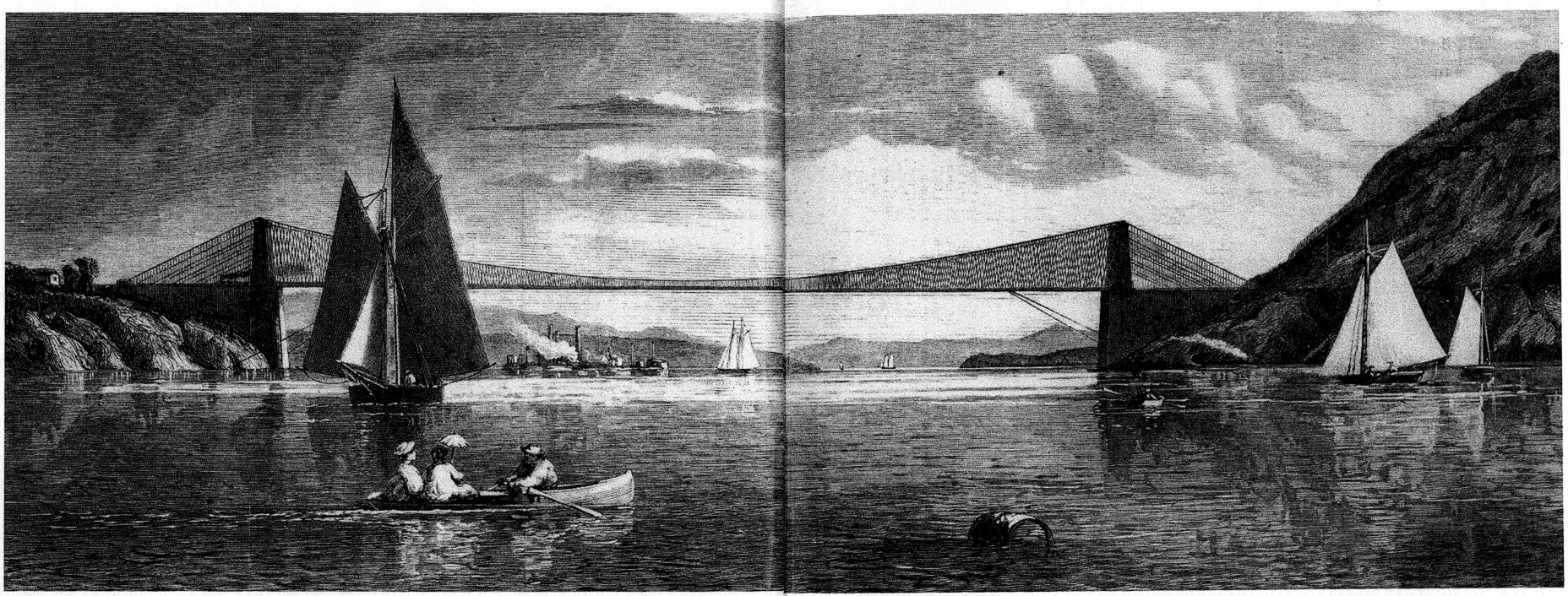
flat tin-covered roof. This addition likewise provided an enlarged basement for informal dining close to the kitchen. The old Lucet barn to the west was enlarged into a two-story structure with vertical board siding on a stone foundation, housing horse and cow stalls and storage space for firewood, farm equipment, and the family carriage.

The Bridge That Never Was

In 1868, after more than three decades at Clinton House, life for the Pells took an unusual turn. Fort Clinton, where the house stood, was proposed as the site for a suspension bridge across the river to Anthony's Nose. This project was intended as part of a plan to construct a railroad line through the Highlands and across northern Westchester and Putnam counties to link the Erie Railroad at Turner's Station (now Harriman) in Orange County with the New England railway system at the Connecticut border.

The undertaking was authorized by the New York Legislature, a bridge company was incorporated, and it was promptly declared that the span would be completed by 1871. This date was extended to 1875 by an amending act passed two years later. The concept advanced to a point where an artistic rendering of the bridge in its Highlands setting by Alfred

THE PROPOSED SUSPENSION BRIDGE over the Hudson River near Anthony's Nose in the Highlands as planned by General Edward W. Serrell, engineer-in-chief. Drawn by Alfred Wordsworth Thompson (1840–1896), and published in *Harper's Weekly*, June 13, 1868. View looking north from Iona Island, Fort Clinton at left and Anthony's Nose at right.



Wordsworth Thompson was published in *Harper's Weekly* on June 13, 1868. The following December, a printed broadside announcing the sale of the great wooden gristmill in the Popolopen Gorge listed its location as "very near the spot where the suspension bridge is said to be located." As it was, however, no transfer of Pell property had even taken place.

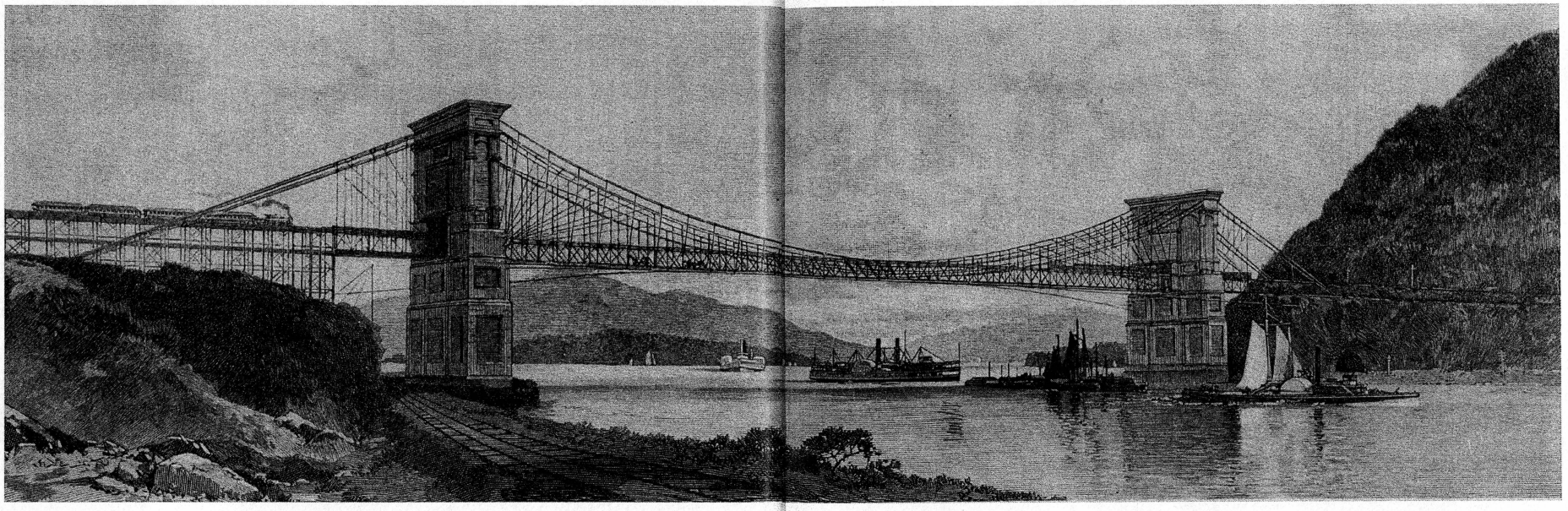
Further indication of increased transportation activity in the Highlands came in this same circular, with mention made of a completed survey for a proposed West Shore Railroad along the river. The nearby West Pointers, eager for greater contact with the outside world, hoped the project would soon be a reality. Their eager anticipation notwithstanding, nothing came of this early attempt at bridge building. Twenty years would elapse before the dormant plan was reactivated.[16]

During this period, on April 22, 1882, Richard Pell, who could boast of a home on New York's fashionable Fifth Avenue, died. The West Shore Railroad started operation in 1883 and, later in the decade, the north and south banks of the deep Popolopen Gorge were joined by an iron bridge in the Hellhole wilderness above the mill.

On May 9, 1889, after a family ownership of 55 years, George Washington Pell and his wife Mary sold the 50-acre tract purchased by his mother and the 25 acres he and Richard acquired in 1866, to the Hudson Suspension Bridge and New England Railway Company for $20,000. This sale included all of the Pell property, save for a strip along the river previously conveyed to the railroad.[17]

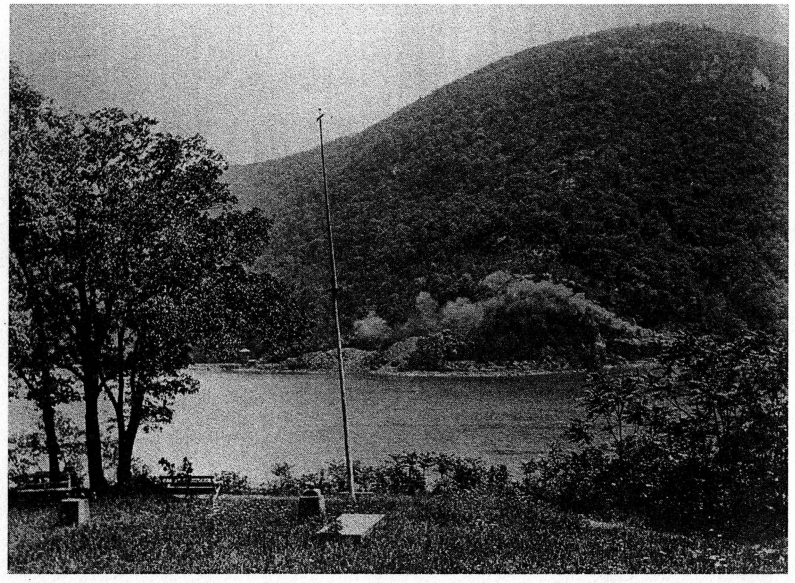
In contrast to the failed enterprise of 1868, this time work actually began on the new span. In May 1890, *Harper's Weekly* published a pictorial representation of the bridge by Charles Graham, and reported that the ground was being prepared for the erection of the towers. Colonel

THE SECOND DESIGN, 1890, for the proposed railroad bridge across the Hudson between Anthony's Nose and Fort Clinton. Construction was started, but never completed. Drawing by Charles Graham, published in *Harper's Weekly*, May 10, 1890. View north from south dock at Bear Mountain, with the West Shore Railroad at left under the bluff where the Pell house stood.



William Winthrop, a West Pointer who had visited Fort Clinton while it was still owned by George Pell, decried the "ruthless" work, saying that during the turning of soil a little Revolutionary War battery on the river slope was almost obliterated. After a sad "deterioration" of the premises, work suddenly ceased and the project was abandoned.

The ambitious undertaking ran into problems. Instead of the promised completion within two years, a decree of foreclosure was issued by court order at White Plains in September 1892, in a bill of complaint brought against the bridge company by the Atlantic Trust Company. The realty was ordered sold at public auction. The sole reminder of the aborted project was a footing for the intended eastern tower blasted in the rock at the base of Anthony's Nose, which was later utilized for the tower of the Bear Mountain Bridge, erected on the same site in 1923-24.[18]



THE HUDSON RIVER AND ANTHONY'S NOSE from the lawn of the Pell house, showing the two pyramidal stone blocks on which a Revolutionary War cannonball and bar shot were mounted. The footing blasted at the base of Anthony's Nose for the proposed bridge of 1890–92 is in the distance. Photograph by Edward Wenzel, Sr., 1908.

The high bidder at the sale held on April 17, 1893, in the Newburgh courthouse was Rowland Hazard of Peace Dale, Rhode Island. His bid of $10,000, paid to the referee, secured ownership of the Fort Clinton property. Three years later, he conveyed the 50-acre tract "with the buildings and improvements" to John N. Hazard for $7,000. Following John's death, his executrix, Augusta G. Hazard of Rhode Island, released all of his land in Rockland and Orange counties to Henry Martin of Princeton, New Jersey, for $100 on March 1, 1905.[19]

The Last Years

The Hermitage—or Clinton House, if called by its other name—was not touched in the construction upheaval of 1890-92. In the 12 years of Hazard ownership and Martin occupancy, its character changed from a country home of elite New Yorkers to that of a boardinghouse for ice company employees and summer visitors.

In 1935, the present writer had the good fortune to glean interesting details about the house from interviews with local inhabitants, especially Enoch Stevens of Fort Montgomery, the park paymaster at Bear Mountain, who had lived in the house as a boy, and his friend John Cronk, who frequently visited with him. Stevens also was able to prepare annotated floor plans and elevations of the house and barn and a layout of the grounds as he remembered them, which provided pertinent details of the mansion's 1799 construction as well as renovations made by the Pells and subsequent owners. Both men recollected that Hazard had some connection with the bridge company as an officer or trustee, and was more or less an absentee owner who left the house in charge of caretakers, the last of whom were the Kerrs and Biernies.[20]

Though the Pells were gone, the family name lingered. The house was still called "the Pell place," and even William Thompson Howell, roaming the environs of the Popolopen Gorge and the slope of Bear

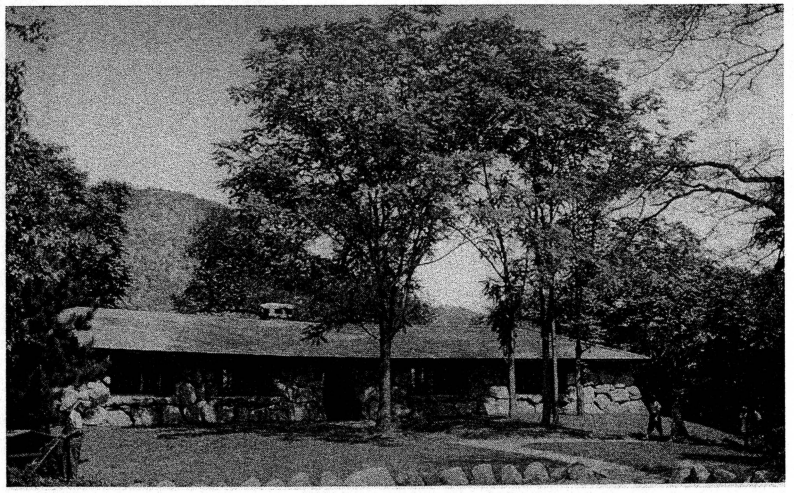
Mountain near the lake, cryptically alluded to the terrain "as the region of G.W.P.," easily bringing to mind the name of George Washington Pell.[21]

Stevens remembered the house, too, as painted yellow with red trim and green latticework across the porches, decorative twisted ironwork along the ridge of the roof, and great trees surrounding the structure. He also recalled a framed picture of "the bridge that was never built" hanging in one of the rooms—no doubt, one of the *Harper* prints. According to a West Shore Railroad guidebook published in 1901, "portions" of the chain drawn across the river during the American Revolution were on the grounds. When Howell visited the place in 1910, he commented that it was neglected, but even then he said, "I know no spot on the river so wonderfully fitted for a country place."[22]

The Hermitage was then in its final years. The coming of the 1900s had signaled the end of the ice industry on the lake, milling in the gorge had ceased, and the Pells were but a memory. In 1908, an unwelcome intrusion into the wilderness that proved a catalyst for scenic preservation came in the form of the acquisition and clearing of land for a prison at the lower end of Highland Lake where the Bear Mountain Inn now stands.

The preservation cause thus engendered reached a successful conclusion six months after Howell's last visit to the Hermitage. At an outdoor ceremony on a sunny October day in 1910 at the foot of Bear Mountain, Mary W. Harriman formally presented 10,000 acres of forested mountain land and a $1,000,000 check to the State of New York for the creation of a public park. In return, the State simultaneously relinquished the 700 acres intended for the expansion of Sing Sing Prison for park purposes. In 1916, "the premises known as the Fort Clinton property" was acquired by the State, and the years of private ownership came to an end.

Early in the creation of the Bear Mountain park, the Pell house, empty, forlorn, and open to tramps, was destroyed by fire. In 1935, Enoch Stevens recalled the date as "about 1910." He stated that the fire



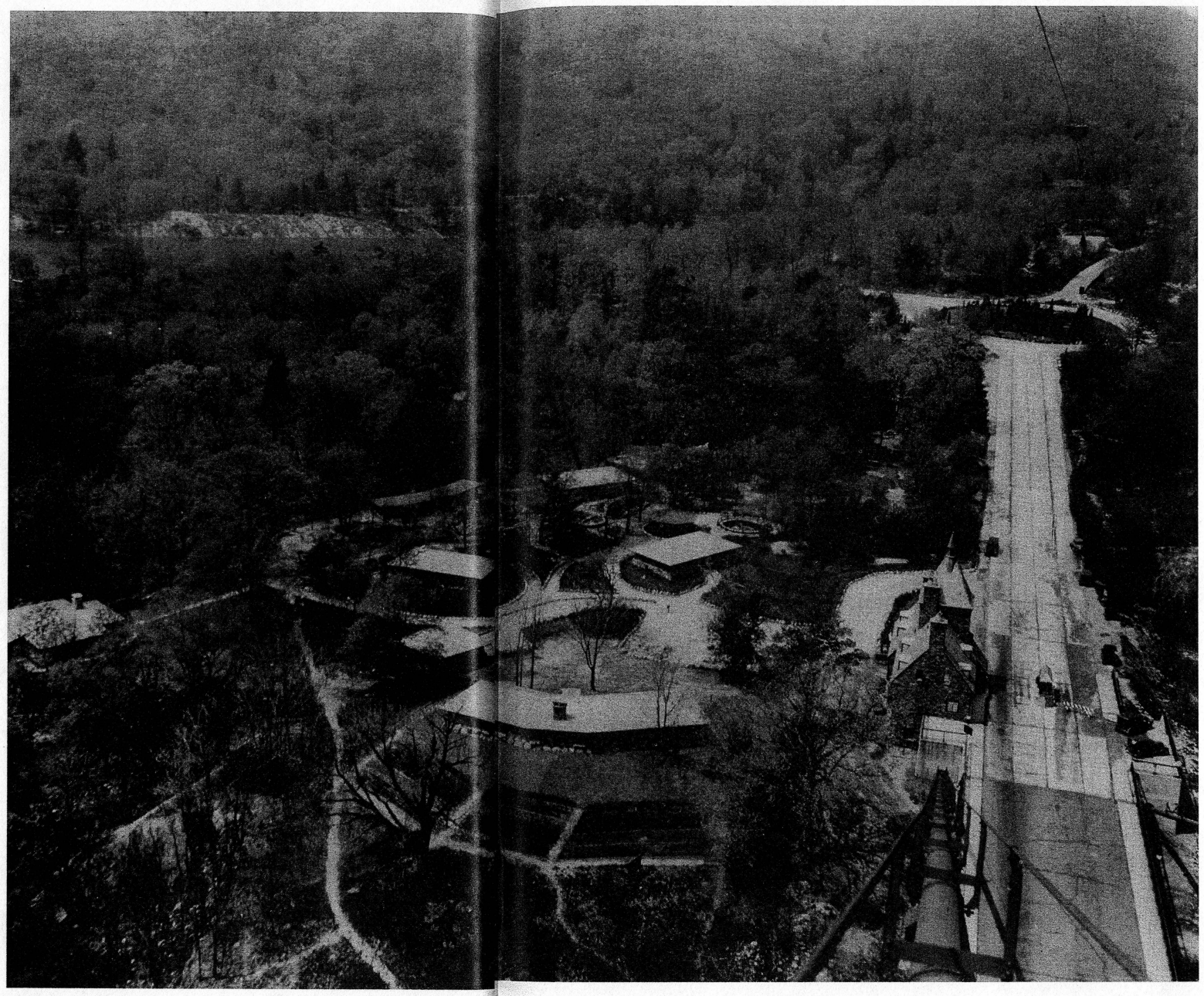
HISTORICAL MUSEUM IN TRAILSIDE, erected in 1934 on the site of the Pell house. Photograph by the author, 1936.

started in the beams of the parlor floor, which was ripped up by the firefighters to extinguish the flames; unfortunately, the place was not watched. The embers started anew and the house was totally destroyed.

Several of the museums at Bear Mountain's Trailside now occupy the ground where the mansion and its outbuildings stood. The foundation walls of the Hermitage were still visible in 1927 when Bill and Marion Carr came to Trailside to undertake their pioneering work in developing the museums and nature trails. The walls were removed in 1934 for the construction of the Historical Museum, into which some of the stones were incorporated. Many objects discarded from the house during its long occupation including knives, spoons, glassware, nails, locks, horse bits, and even a steelyard for weighing meat were recovered when the surrounding ground was graded.

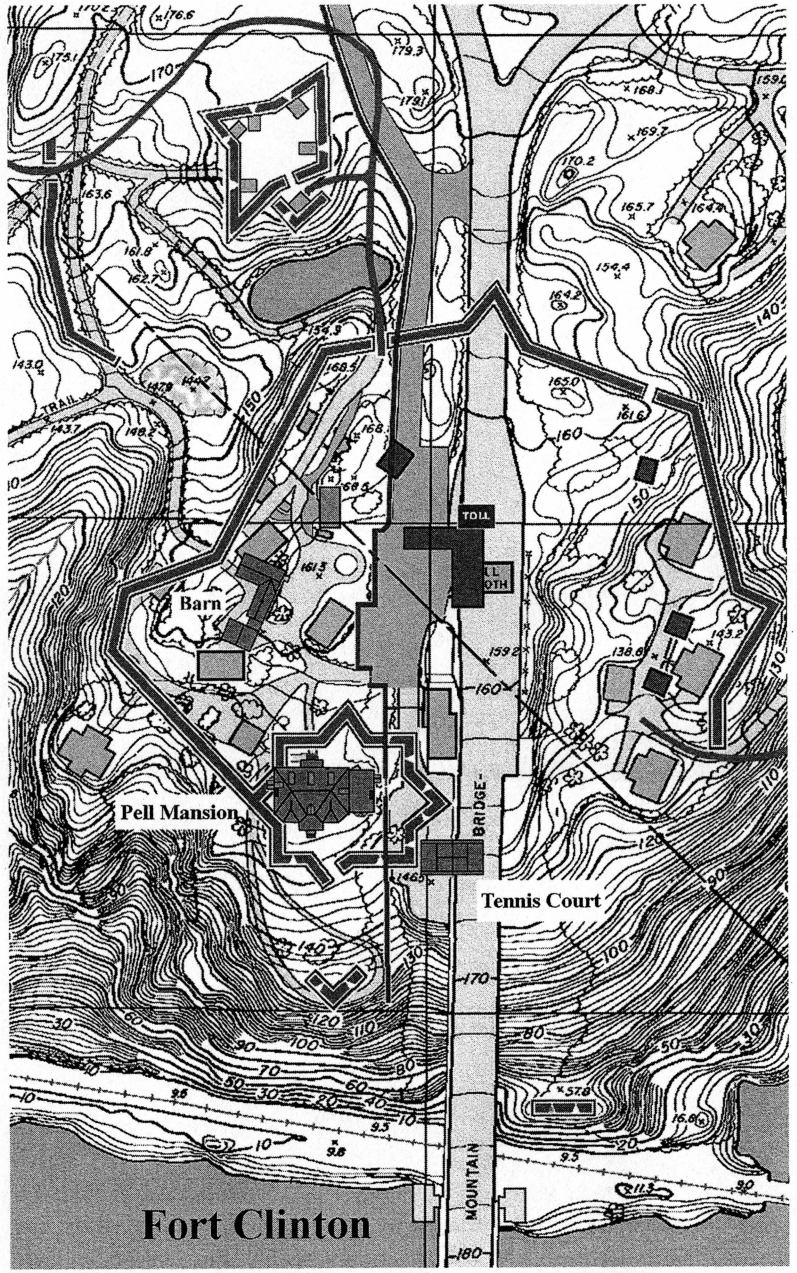
The last remnant of the barn was a five-foot-high section of the stone wall in front of the Botany Museum (now the Nature Study Museum), which stood until removed in 1949 during landscaping. The

LOOKING WEST TOWARD BEAR MOUNTAIN'S TRAILSIDE MUSEUMS FROM THE TOWER OF THE BEAR MOUNTAIN BRIDGE. Site of Fort Clinton, 1776–77. The Pell house stood on the site of the Historical Museum in the center foreground. The Bear Mountain Bridge traffic circle and bridge approach road are at right. Hessian Lake is at the upper left. Photograph by LeRoy Davies, 1934.

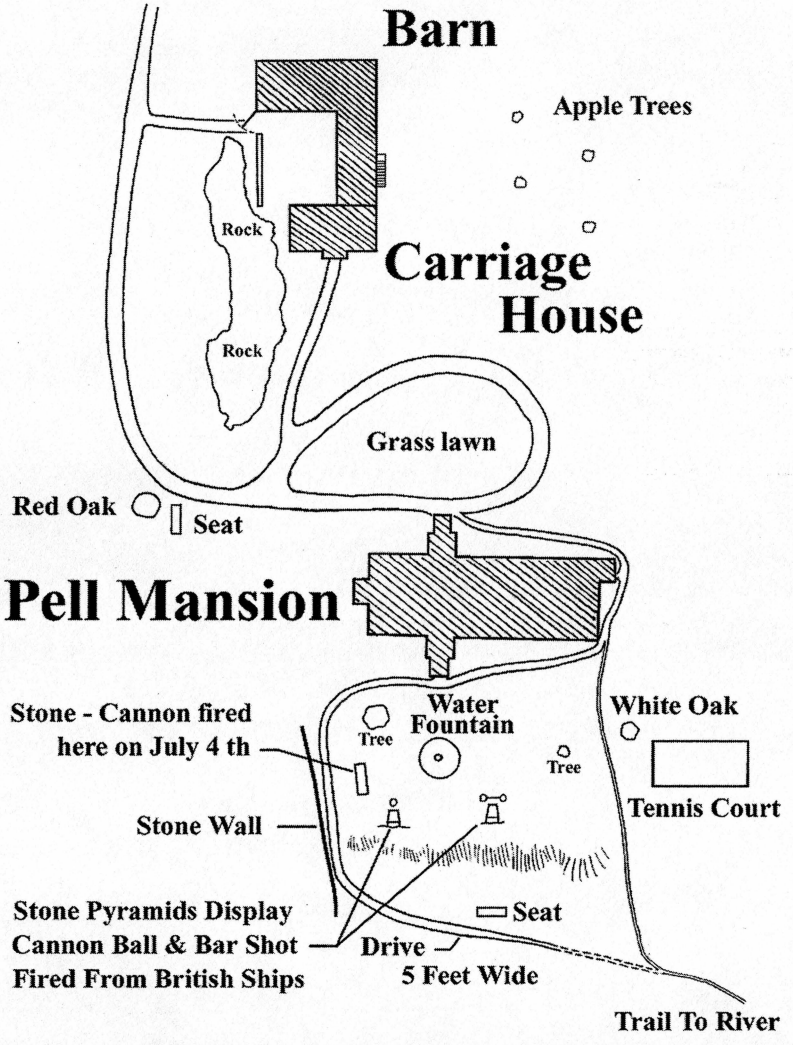


only remaining trace of the Pell sojourn is a stone retaining wall, in some places 12 feet high, that formed part of the terracing on the abrupt hillside south of the Historical Museum.

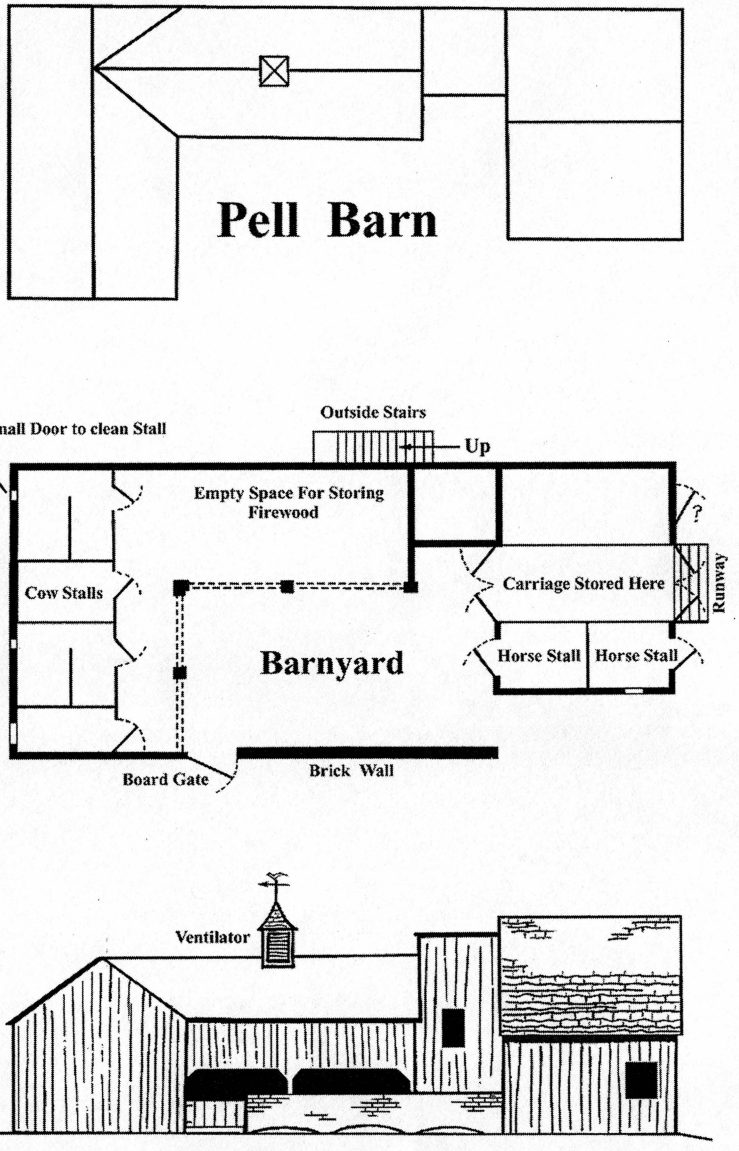
The interest of local people, fortunately, saved a few of the striking Pell mementos. The *Nous y voici* slab, which Stevens remembered as "the stone with the French inscription," was rescued when the property grew derelict. It was preserved by the Beatty family on Canterbury Road in Fort Montgomery for many years until it was returned to Trailside and placed in the Historical Museum on its original site. The two pyramidal stones with the attached cannonball and bar shot were also removed from their endangered location on the lawn early in the century and were presented by Mrs. Katharine B. Roe to the West Point Museum. But they, too, have been returned to Trailside and again stand in familiar surroundings long enjoyed by the New York gentlewoman, Adelia Pell, and her sons.[23]



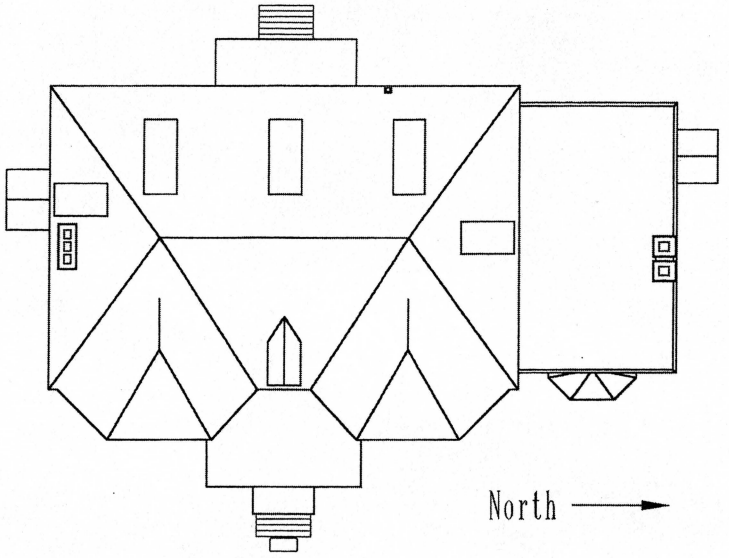
OPPOSITE: TYPOGRAPHY OF THE TRAILSIDE AREA. Showing the locations of the Pell Mansion and barn and Trailside Museums in relation to the redoubts and defenses of Fort Clinton and the Bear Mountain Bridge approach road. Reconstruction by Robert P. Wallace.

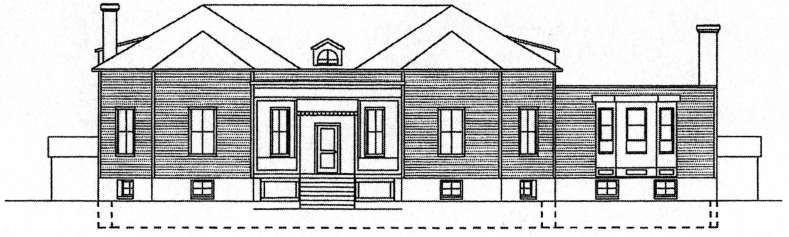


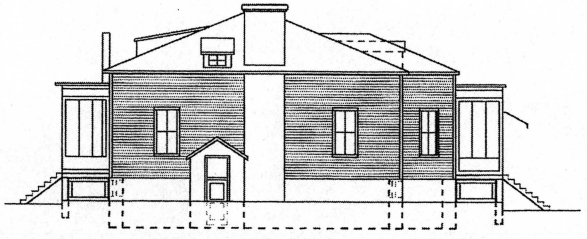
THE HERMITAGE GROUNDS. Reconstruction by Enoch Stevens, 1935.

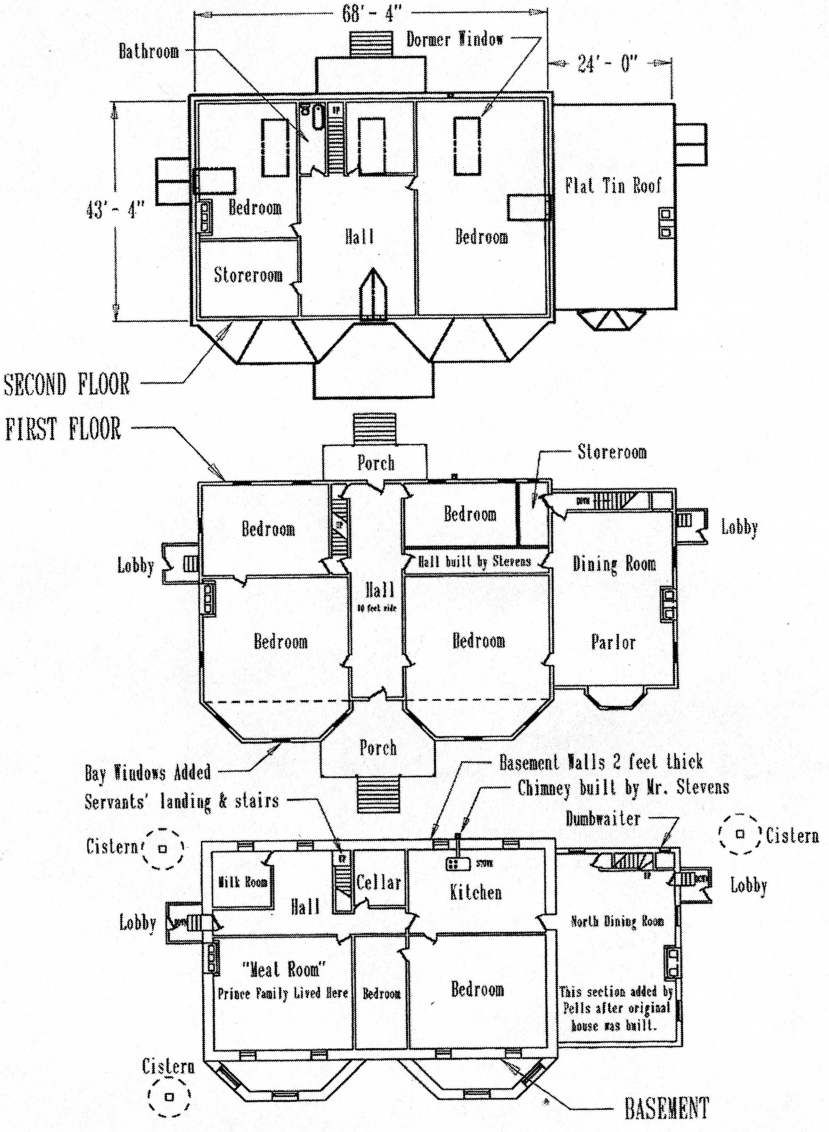


THE PELL BARN. Plan and elevation by Enoch Stevens, 1935.

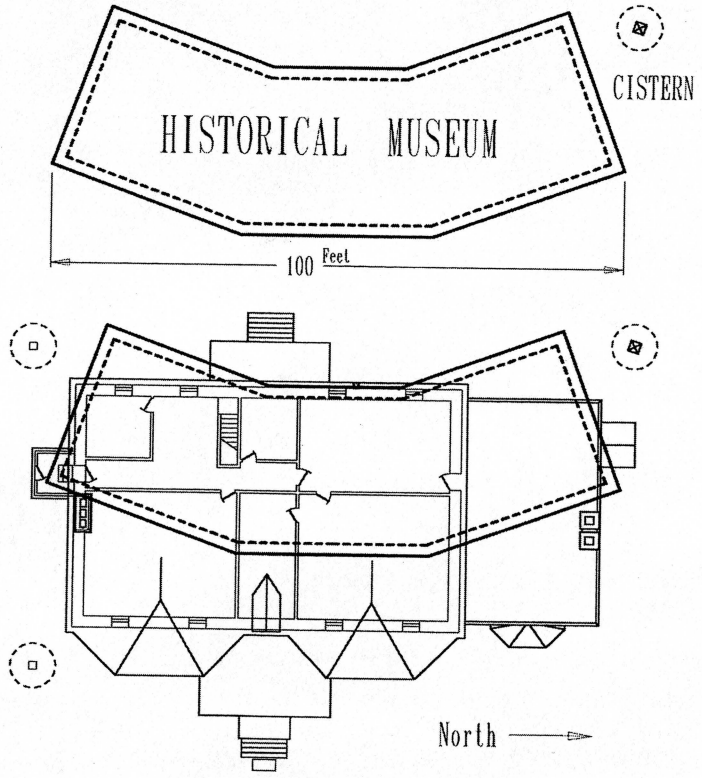








PLANS OF THE FIRST AND SECOND FLOORS AND BASEMENT OF THE HERMITAGE.
Reconstruction from drawings by Enoch Stevens, showing the Pell enlargement of the Lucet house of 1799, with later alterations for its use as a boarding house.



THE TRAILSIDE HISTORICAL MUSEUM aligned on the walls of the Hermitage on the same site. Reconstruction by Robert P. Wallace.

Notes

1. For Lucet and his activity in the Popolopen valley and at Bear Hill, see David Cole, editor, *History of Rockland County, New York* (New York, 1884), pp. 324, 343: Richard L. Porter, "A History of the Queensboro Iron Works," Orange County Historical Society, Journal, XXIV (1995), pp. 40-56; James M. Ransom, *Vanishing Ironworks of the Ramapos* (New Brunswick, 1966), pp. 139, 159, 240; New York *Directory*, 1797-1809. Details of Lucet's house and the proffered sale of his properties can be seen in the advertisement he and Lagarenne placed in *The Spectator* (New York), December 21, 1799, and repeated in issues for December 25, and 28, 1799, January 1, 4, 8, 11, 15, 18, 22, 25, 1800 (file at the New York Historical Society), with abstract of same in Ransom, pp. 139-40, 157-59. See also, William T. Howell, *The Hudson Highlands*, I (New York, 1933), pp. 87-88.
2. John Maude, *A Visit to the Falls of Niagara in 1800* (London, 1826), p. 7, who identified Lucet as a "French gentleman," but the name is incorrectly published as "Ducet." See also, *New York Evening Post*, March 3, 1802, cited in Rita S. Gottesman, comp. *The Arts and Crafts in New York, 1800-1804: Advertisements and News Items from New York City Newspapers* (New York, New York Historical Society, 1965), pp. 228-29. See also, Porter, *loc. cit.* Ransom, pp. 140, 159-60, citing *New York Evening Post*, September 14, 1810.
3. Rockland County Deeds, Book E, pp. 502-04, 504-06, Book F, pp. 339-41, County Clerk's Office, New City, NY; Howell, *op. cit.*, I, pp. 87-88.
4. Rockland County Deeds, Book I, pp. 373-75, 375-77; Benson J. Lossing, *The Pictorial Field Book of the Revolution* (New York, 1860), I, p. 731; Frank B. Green, *The History of Rockland County* (New York, 1886), pp. 181-182. The J. B. Mills survey map of the Bear Hill tract circa 1854-60 (see Note 6) indicates the locations of the property lines of the square Pell tract, and also the location at that date of Vincent Weyant's residence near a dock on the river shore of Doodletown Bight.
5. "Bond Street Three Score Years Ago," in *New York Evening Post*, July 13, 1889; For Adelia described as lively as a cricket, see Edward P. Alexander, *A Revolutionary Conservative: James Duane of New York* (New York, 1938), p. 215.
6. Interesting details of the Pell estate and adjacent terrain, involving property lines and designation of the house as The Hermitage, are indicated on an undated manuscript *Map of the 'Bear Hill Tract,' Property of Vincent Weyant*

dec[eased], Monroe, Orange Co., N.Y., which was drawn circa 1854-60 from a survey by J. B. Mills and filed in Rockland County. Internal evidence and the fact that the Pell tract is indicated as "property of Rich[ard] Pell, Esq.," who owned the ground during that period, approximate the date of the survey. The author is indebted to Paul R. Huey of the Bureau of Historic Sites, New York State Office of Parks, Recreation and Historic Preservation, for making this map available. A later version of a part of this map, incorporating some of its features and showing the location of the suspension bridge across the Hudson River proposed in 1868, was filed in the Rockland County Clerk's Office on February 2, 1872. The name of "Richard Pell" attached to the house is of particular interest on this later chart, insofar as the original 50-acre Pell tract on which it stood was owned by Richard's brother, George Washington Pell, from 1860 to 1889.

7. The five sons of Alfred and Adelia Pell were Robert Livingston Pell, James Duane Pell, John Augustus Pell, George Washington Pell, and Richard Montgomery Pell. Alfred's will of 1831 mentioned two farms he owned in Ulster County, one called Pell-Ville and the other Hammond Farm on the Wallkill River. See New York County Wills, Liber 65, p. 277; Liber 67, p. 185, Surrogate's Court, Hall of Records, Records Department (Room 402), New York County.
8. October 8, 1777, was a Wednesday, not a Tuesday as carved on the stone, now on exhibit in Trailside's Historical Museum.
9. New York County Wills, Liber 131, p. 261; Lossing, I, p. 731.
10. Rockland County Deeds, Book P, pp. 448-49.
11. Lossing, I, p. 731.
12. The brownstone blocks on which the cannonball and bar shot were mounted were deeply incised in block letters with legends pertaining to their identification. That on which the cannonball was mounted was inscribed: "Oct. 1777. Thrown from a British frigate upon this spot where it lay buried XCII years," indicating its recovery in 1869. That on which the bar shot rests was inscribed: "Oct. 1777. Fired from the British frigate *Tartar.*" HMS *Tartar*, 28 guns, was one of the vessels of the Royal Navy participating by water in the British attack on Forts Clinton and Montgomery on October 6, 1777. The Fort Montgomery chain links from the Pell collection given to the New York Historical Society in 1866 and 1928 were possibly cut from a section of the chain recovered from the river off Fort Montgomery in September 1861 by George W. Wetherell, of which one link, presented by Isaac Faurot in 1862, is at Washington's Headquarters State Historic Site in Newburgh. The "portion" presented to the Society by Richard Pell in 1866 is not now in the Society's collection, but the two boxed links given in 1928 are still in the collection. See Edward M. Ruttenber, *Catalogue of Manuscripts and Relics in Washington's Headquarters, Newburgh, N.Y.* (Newburgh, 1874), p. 72; New York Historical Society accessions record, February 7, 1866, May 22, 1928. A West Shore Railroad guidebook of 1901 mentioned Hudson River chain links still visible on the Pell grounds, which may have been among the 15. It may well be that the two links now displayed on the great stone fireplace in the Bear Mountain Inn, presented to the Palisades Interstate Park Commission by J. Pierpont Morgan in 1916 but otherwise unidentified as to provenance, could likewise have come from the section drawn from the river in 1861. Another two Hudson River chain links of similar dimensions as those from Fort Montgomery were presented to the American Scenic and Historic Preservation Society for the Stony Point Battlefield Museum by Mrs. James O. Sheldon in 1909, and are now in that collection.
13. New York County, Surrogate's Court, Wills, Liber 131, p. 261; Rockland County Deeds, Book 34, pp. 407-10; *New York Evening Post,* February 8, 1860.
14. Rockland County Deeds, Book 37, pp. 471-75; Book 151, pp. 1-7. See also Orange County Deeds, Liber 92, p. 107, County Clerk's Office, Goshen, NY. A *Map of the Highlands of the Hudson, Orange County* (Newburgh, 1880), from surveys of James P. Kirby, places the plots owned by "G. W. & R. M. Pell" inside the Revolutionary War fort between the river and the road that traversed the fort from old Fort Montgomery village to Popolopen Creek. F. W. Beers, *Atlas of the Hudson River Valley from New York City to Troy* (1891), indicates the same land in ownership of "G. W. Pell." The Pell holdings encompassed much of the fortification.
15. The Pells' close association with the Highlands is seen in memorial tablets erected for generations of family members in the Church of the Holy Innocents (erected 1846-47) in Highland Falls: Alfred Pell (1805-1869), Elizabeth Cruger Pell (1809-1846), Eliza Wood Pell (1817-1874), William Cruger Pell (1830-1898), Alfred Pell (1833-1901), Mary Tracy Pell (1839-1882), Frederic Pell (1845-1875), Edith Pell Archer-Shee (1851-1890), and Huntington Pell (1855-1904).
16. The details of the 1868 bridge project are given in a 26-page pamphlet (with map) entitled *The Hudson Suspension Bridge and New England Railway Company* (New York, 1870) (copy in New York Historical Society). The bridge project, under the corporate sponsorship of the Hudson Highland Suspension Bridge Company and authorized by the New York Legislature on April 27, 1868, initially stipulated that the bridge was to be built at some point between Verplanck's Point and Buttermilk Falls (now Highland Falls) and was to be completed by July 4, 1871. The amending act passed by the Legislature on May 9, 1870, fixing the location at Anthony's Nose, changed the corporate name to The Hudson Suspension Bridge and New England Railway Company and extended the date of completion to July 4, 1875. It is evident, however, judging from Thompson's illustration published in 1868, that the site under consideration from the start was the crossing between Anthony's Nose and Fort Clinton where the Pells were located. Pertinent details involving dimensions and construction and citing the "enormous strength" of the contemplated span can be found in an article on the "New

F – General

Who Was Mrs. Pell?

A 19TH CENTURY GENTLELADY AT BEAR MOUNTAIN

by Richard J. Koke

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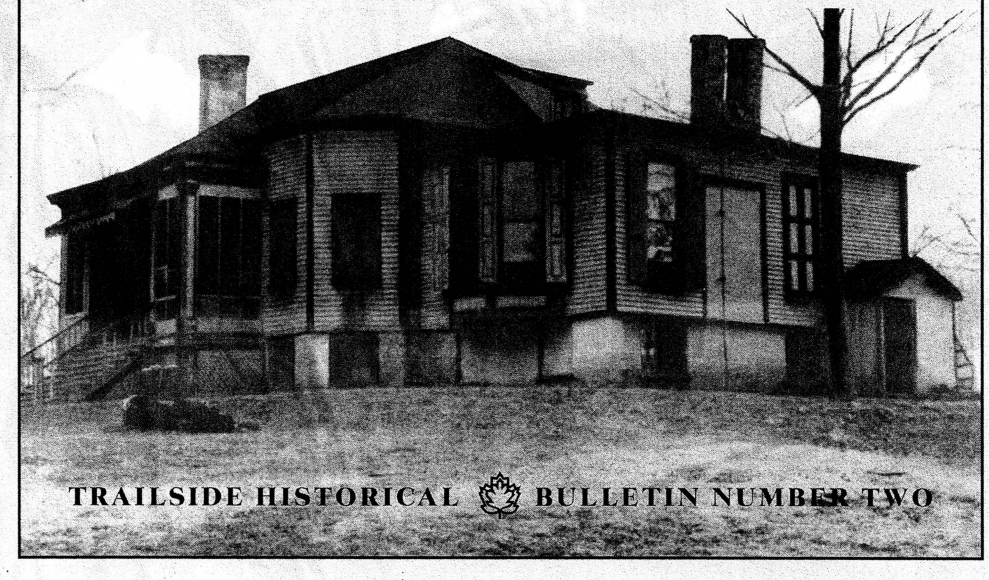


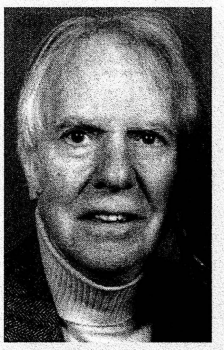
TRAILSIDE HISTORICAL BULLETIN NUMBER TWO

Suspension Bridge" published in *Harper's Weekly*, June 13, 1868, p. 377, which also affirmed that "work upon the ground will soon be entered upon vigorously." A copy of the broadside announcing the sale of the mill property on Popolopen Creek belonging to the estate of James Miller, dated December 1, 1868, is in the collection of Trailside's Historical Museum. For the enthusiasm of West Pointers for the proposed West Shore Railroad, which began operation in 1883, see S. S. Colt, *The Tourist's Guide Through the Empire State* (Albany, 1871), p. 50.

17. Rockland County Deeds, Book 151, pp. 1-7.
18. *Harper's Weekly*, May 10, 1890; Rockland County Deeds, Book 182, pp. 315-21; William Winthrop, *Old Forts in the Hudson Highlands*, undated manuscript, Manuscript Department, New York Historical Society.
19. Rockland County Deeds, Book 182, pp. 315-21; Book 219, pp. 322-24. The J. M. Lathrop *Atlas of Orange County* (Philadelphia, 1903) indicates a total of 87 acres in the "Hazard estate" at Fort Clinton.
20. For the Pell estate, see also the report by Edward J. Lenik and Diane Dallal, *Stage I and II: Archaeological Investigations for Service Access Improvements on the Site of Fort Clinton, Palisades Interstate Park, Bear Mountain, New York* (Butler, N.J., 1992), pp. 55-66 (copy in Palisades Interstate Park Commission file at Trailside Museums).
21. W. T. Howell, II (1934), p. 131.
22. Ibid, I (1933), p. 88; West Shore Railroad, *Suburban Homes Along the West Shore Railroad* (New York, 1901), p. 61.
23. *Catalogue of the Ordnance Museum,* United States Military Academy (West Point, 1929), p.143.

Editor's Note: WILLIAM H. CARR (1902–1983) was director of Trailside Museums from its inception in 1927 to 1944. He and his wife Marion (d. 1995) established at Bear Mountain the first outdoor, living museum for interpreting the animals, plants, and geology of a specific region. In 1941, Marion hosted a popular nature segment during the Bear Mountain Park Radio Show on WGNY. In 1949, Bill took his ideas to the Southwest where he founded the Ghost Ranch Museum near Abiquiu, N.M. In 1952, he co-founded and served as first director of the Arizona-Sonora Desert Museum in Tucson.

Bear Mountain's Trailside Museums & Wildlife Center sits on historic ground—land once occupied by Fort Clinton. Along with Fort Montgomery, the site played a dramatic role in the War of Independence. Richard J. Koke and William H. Carr told the story in the first Trailside Historical Bulletin, *Twin Forts of the Popolopen,* which was published in 1937 by the American Museum of Natural History. Sixty-five years later, on the occasion of its 75th anniversary in 2002, Trailside proudly presents its second bulletin, WHO WAS MRS. PELL? This sequel, written by one of the original authors, recounts the history of the property and its people from 1796 through the early days of Bear Mountain State Park.



RICHARD J. KOKE's lifelong interest in the rich Revolutionary War history of the Hudson Highlands had its beginnings in the years he spent with Trailside Museums in Bear Mountain, New York. As Trailside's historian from 1935 to 1937, Mr. Koke participated in the early archaeological excavations at Forts Clinton and Montgomery. From 1937 to 1941, he was curator of the museum at Stony Point Battlefield State Historic Site.

During World War II, Mr. Koke served in the Historical Section of the European Theater. After the war, he worked at Saratoga National Historical Park. From 1947 to 1983, Mr. Koke was curator of the museum at the New York Historical Society, and is now its emeritus curator. He currently lives in the Adirondacks in northern New York.

Mr. Koke is also author of *Accomplice in Treason: Joshua Hett Smith and the Arnold Conspiracy* and *Corridor Through the Mountain.* He compiled *American Landscape and Genre Paintings in the New York Historical Society* and contributes articles on New York and military subjects to historical journals.

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